MONTREAT CONFERENCE

STEWARDSHIP

APRIL 14-17, 1996

JOHN M. BUCHANAN, PASTOR
FOURTH PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, CHICAGO

1. Sunday evening, April 14

   10 minute preview
   Give It All

2. Monday morning, April 15

   A Matter of Value
   Theological and Biblical Reflections on Stewardship

   Biblical texts:
   Mark 10:17-27
   Luke 12:22-34
   1 Timothy 6:6-19

3. Wednesday evening, April 17

   The Value of Your Soul
   The Stewardship of Your Own Life

   Biblical text:
   Mark 8:34-37

4/5/96

Make copy

MONTREAT Wed 4/17/96

[redacted] 1996

FOURTH PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, CHICAGO
JOHN M. BUCHANAN, PASTOR

MARK 8:34-37
MATTHEW 16:21-28
LUKE 9:21-27

1. THE VALUE OF YOUR SOUL

AND JESUS SUMMONED THE MULTITUDE WITH THE DISCIPLES, AND SAID TO THEM, 'IF ANY WOULD COME AFTER ME, LET THEM DENY THEMSELVES AND TAKE UP THEIR CROSS AND FOLLOW ME. FOR THOSE WHO WOULD SAVE THEIR LIFE WILL LOSE IT; AND THOSE WHO LOST THEIR LIFE FOR MY SAKE AND THE GOSPEL'S WILL SAVE IT. FOR WHAT IS ONE PROFITED, IF ONE GAINS THE WHOLE WORLD

AND FORFEITS ONE'S LIFE? FOR WHAT SHALL ONE GIVE IN RETURN FOR ONE'S LIFE?'"

-MARK 8:34-37

(INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE LECTIONARY)

"WHAT SHALL IT PROFIT A MAN OR A WOMAN TO GAIN THE WHOLE WORLD AND LOSE HIS OR HER SOUL?"

SOME TIME AGO I WAS PART OF A SEMINAR IN WASHINGTON WHICH BROUGHT TOGETHER A GROUP OF PRESBYTERIAN MINISTERS AND GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS WHO HAPPENED TO BE PRESBYTERIANS. THERE WERE TWELVE OF US. WE WERE IN A VAN, WAITING AT THE GATE OF THE WHITE HOUSE. A SECRET SERVICE MAN ASKED US FOR OUR

Washington Scene - through theology
Chevy Chase Ch
Tom Jones +
John + Mary Dawson
Xi'anity + Civic

I am deeply honored to be in your pulpit this AM
happy to be in Scottsdale - & not Chicago - where streets are not without cacti -

- Honored because I WAS I have come to know about this great church
from - my predecessor Elder -
about - your mission committee -
your strong support of our PC(USA).
+ because I my respect + admiration for your pastor - a leader
+ effective pastor.
Thank you for - hospitality - for A Bress. & Agncourt -

DRIVER'S LICENSES IN ORDER TO DO A SECURITY CHECK. I had lost mine, the day before and actually - after ~~MINE WAS LOST~~; ~~MORE ACCURATELY, IT HAD BEEN STOLEN~~. ~~IN ANY EVENT~~, ALL I HAD ON MY PERSON WITH MY NAME ON IT WAS A CHURCH BUSINESS CARD AND THE CHURCH CREDIT CARD. I TRIED THE BUSINESS CARD. THE SECRET SERVICE MAN DISAPPEARED INTO HIS OFFICE, RETURNED WITH SECURITY BADGES, THE KIND YOU WEAR AROUND YOUR NECK, WITH THE LICENSES CLIPPED ON. WHEN HE CAME TO ME, HE SAID, "MR. BUCHANAN, MAY I TALK WITH YOU?" I CLIMBED OUT OF THE VAN AMIDST THE LAUGHTER OF MY COLLEAGUES WHO WERE TELLING HIM THAT I WAS INDEED A VERY REAL THREAT TO NATIONAL SECURITY. HE ASKED IF I DIDN'T HAVE ANYTHING WHICH

-expertly & painlessly lifted in the Train in from U'HARE-

WOULD SIMPLY ASSURE THEM THAT I WAS WHO I CLAIMED TO BE. APPARENTLY, I HAD LOST MORE THAN MY WALLET AND SOME MONEY... MY IDENTITY WAS AT STAKE. SO I PULLED OUT THE CHURCH AMERICAN EXPRESS CARD WHICH DOES HAVE MY NAME ON IT. HE SEEMED TO BE GREATLY RELIEVED. I WAS APPROVED. AMERICAN EXPRESS GOT ME IN THE WHITE HOUSE - WHEN MY WORD, THE ASSURANCES OF MY DISTINGUISHED COLLEAGUES AND MY EMPLOYMENT AT THE FOURTH PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF CHICAGO WERE BRUSHED ASIDE. I'M GLAD I HAD NOT LEFT HOME WITHOUT IT.

One of my favorite short stories is by

~~SHORTLY THEREAFTER, I ENCOUNTERED~~ A JOHN UPDIKE, ~~SHORT STORY~~ ENTITLED THE WALLET. IT IS ABOUT FULHAM, A RETIRED

In the Beauty of the Lilies

4 generations

Clarence Wilmott - FPC - loses faith & voice

BROKER, WHO ("HAD ASSEMBLED A NICE LIFE - BLUE-EYED WIFE ~~STILL TRIM AND PRESENTABLE AFTER THIRTY YEARS OF MARRIAGE~~, RED-HAIRED DAUGHTER OFF IN THE WORLD AND DOING WELL, HANDSOME WHITE HOUSE IN THE OLDER SUBURBS.")

Updike describes Mamman better than anon - also Vclm.

FULHAM SPENDS HIS TIME MANAGING HIS OWN INVESTMENTS AND THOSE OF A FAVORED FEW OLD CLIENTS IN AN UPSTAIRS ROOM. EVERY MORNING HE GOES TO HIS ROOM WITH THE WALL STREET JOURNAL, A SECOND CUP OF DECAFFEINATED COFFEE, TO MAKE PHONE CALLS, LOOK OUT THE WINDOW AT HIS NEATLY MANICURED LAWN, TO SURVEY AND ENJOY THE WORLD HE HAS GAINED.

AND THEN DISASTER STRIKES. ONE MORNING HE CAN'T FIND HIS WALLET. NOW, IF YOU ARE NOT AN OBSESSIVE PERSON YOU MAY NOT UNDERSTAND WHAT THIS STORY IS ABOUT. IF YOU ARE, IF YOU SPEND AS MUCH TIME AS I DO IN A STATE OF AGITATION BECAUSE YOU CAN'T FIND YOUR KEYS OR PEN OR GLASSES.. YOU MAY FIND IT [redacted] PROVOCATIVE. FULHAM LOOKS EVERYWHERE: UNDER CHAIRS, BEDS, HE EVEN GOES THROUGH POCKETS OF SUITS HE HASN'T WORN FOR MONTHS. HE GOES A LITTLE BERSERK.. HIS [redacted] WALLET WAS "A FRIENDLY ADJUNCT TO HIS PERSON, A REMINDER, IN ITS DELICATE PRESSURE UPON HIS LEFT BUTTOCK, OF HIS NEW STAGE OF LIFE... CONTAINING CHARGE CARDS FOR BAY BANK, BROOKS BROTHERS,

HERTZ, VISA, AMOCO, AMERICAN EXPRESS, MASTER CHARGE, THE HARVARD CO-OP, MASSACHUSETTS GENERAL HOSPITAL - PLUS HIS PLASTICIZED DRIVER'S LICENSE AND CARDS SIGNIFYING HIS MEMBERSHIP IN THE MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, COUNTRY CLUB, BLUE CROSS/BLUE SHIELD, SOCIAL SECURITY AND VARIOUS SENTIMENTAL MEMENTOS AND PICTURES."

Variation on Credo in check stubs - your life in the plastic cards in your wallet. - (get em out + look at them - catalogue them inventory)

increasingly frenzied

AFTER SEVERAL DAYS OF SEARCHING, FULHAM ANNOUNCES TO HIS WIFE THAT SOMEONE, OBVIOUSLY, HAS SLIPPED INTO THE HOUSE AND STOLEN HIS WALLET, PUNCTUATING HIS PROCLAMATION WITH OBSCENITIES.

HIS WIFE SAYS: "I'VE NEVER SEEN YOU LIKE THIS."

"HOW AM I?"

"YOU'RE WILD."

"IT WAS MY WALLET. EVERYTHING IS IN IT. EVERYTHING. WITHOUT THAT WALLET, I'M NOTHING."

FULHAM FINDS HIS WALLET. IN FACT, HIS GRANDSON FINDS IT FOLDED UP IN A BLANKET ON THE COUCH. AND UPDIKE CLOSES WITH HIM "SQUEEZING THE BELOVED BENT BOOK OF LEATHER BETWEEN HIS TWO PALMS

like prayer book
Bible — ?

AND FEELING VERY GRANDPATERNAL, FRAGILE, WISER AND READY TO DIE."

"WITHOUT THAT WALLET, I'M NOTHING," FULHAM SAID. JESUS SAID, "WHAT SHALL IT PROFIT A PERSON TO GAIN THE WHOLE WORLD AND TO FORFEIT HIS OR HER LIFE?"

translated life.

THE GREEK WORD IS PSYCHE AND IT MEANS "LIFE", BUT ALSO "SOUL" AND ALSO "SELF." IN POINT OF FACT, IT MAY NOT BE YOUR LIFE YOU ARE IN DANGER OF LOSING. IT'S SOMETHING DEEPER, MORE PROFOUND, MORE IMPORTANT, ACTUALLY. IT'S YOUR SOUL, THAT ESSENTIAL CORE OF BEING INSIDE YOU, THAT INTEGRITY WHICH IF COMPROMISED OR VIOLATED STRIPS YOU OF

deeper, sensual meaning soul food .. music — breath/wind

your most basic identity.

You can gain the whole world, and lose that. Jesus was saying / your integrity, your very soul.

The way to gain your soul, live your life, be your self," he said, is give your life away.

It is the basic, bare bones Xian idea, and it is, I submit, a radically counter-culture idea.

The culture, after all, suggests that gaining a piece of the world is, in fact a pretty good idea..
a project worth of your love, devotion + commitment.

Consumer Economics simply assumes that you and I will live - to gain a piece of the world.

The ads tell me that I'm worked hard and am entitled to the happiness that is produced when I own a nice home, luxury car, can travel wherever + whenever I want.

The Scripture - are ads. slick upscale publications - Vanity Fair - New Yorker - NYT Mag.. so subtle - so intelligent. see 10 classics for Empty Lives.

Shopping has become our number one leisure activity: adolescents hang out at malls... This ~~week's~~ Newsweek in Feb reported that one of the hot items at the 1996 ~~Feb~~ International Toy Fair in NYC last ~~week~~ in Jan - was "Melanies Mall".. collectible mall stores + kiosks, complete

a gold card for each tiny doll ~~the~~ which may be purchased. "This isn't just a Mall, this is Melanie's ~~#~~ whole world" the promotional blurb proclaimed.

You could gain the world & lose your soul" someone observed, ~~I can't~~ There are some indicators that we are recovering from the slavish consumerism of the late 20th century.

For one thing, we have learned that it doesn't work. It is a false gospel. The bumper sticker that promised "The one with the most toys wins" didn't deliver.

Gordon Gekko - discredited; Barbarians at the Gate: Stewart - book on Junk Bond Mich Flier - Michael Milken. Tom Wolfe - Bonfire

Psychiatrists now consult with clients suffering from "success syndrome" - having achieved it all, + bought it all, a depression sets in.

And "burn out" - we do know now - that the human soul gets lost, + sometimes health + life itself, when we give ourselves away to things that don't ultimately matter. There is a palpable psychological / physiological rebellion

Even religion succumbed to the gospel of consumerism. Even the religion which claims the name of the one who said "you could gain the world + lose your soul" toyed with the idea that its own success + faithfulness can be measured by market criteria, numbers, growth charts, market strategy.

Luis Palau - hopes for 500,000 attendance - both the Graham + Sunday (325,000)

Palau spoke here - "to save as many souls as possible"

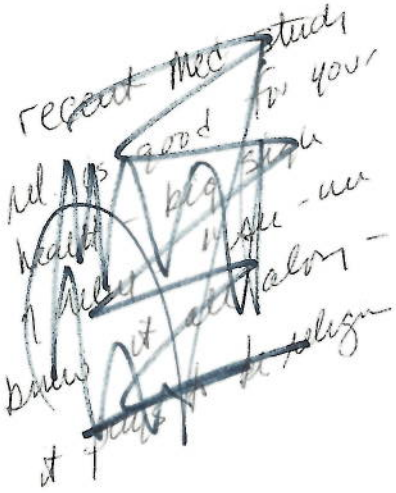
~~FOLLOWED SUIT - OR HAS WANTED TO, IT~~ ~~SEEMS~~. WE PRESBYTERIANS ARE OBSESSED WITH OUR DECLINING MARKET, WRINGING OUR HANDS OVER THE FACT THAT NUMBERS ARE DOWN: THAT WE AREN'T MAINSTREAM OR MAINLINE ANYMORE: THAT WE ARE NOT KEEPING PACE WITH ~~COMPETING GROUPS OR~~ the competition ~~WITH THE SECULARISM OF OUR CULTURE~~. WE MUST BE CONCERNED, BUT ~~SOMETIMES~~ OUR CONCERN IS EXPRESSED IN WAYS THAT RAISE SIGNIFICANT QUESTIONS OF THEOLOGICAL INTEGRITY.

MARTIN MARTY, IN A WHIMSICAL EDITORIAL ABOUT THE OBSESSIVE AND FRANTIC INTEREST IN MAINLINE CHURCH GROWTH AND CHURCH GROWTH STATISTICS,

about the continuing decline
We've done it again: we've lost more than anyone.
It will take imagination & creativity (some of which are accessible when you're expending all your energy trying to figure who to blame

NOTES THAT THE MORMONS, WHO ARE GROWING, ARE WILLING TO MAKE 1,500 HOUSE CALLS TO PRODUCE ONE "FRIENDLY OPENING" AND THAT THE EPISCOPALIANS WHO ARE DECLINING, probably HAVEN'T MADE 1,500 HOUSE CALLS SINCE THE DEATH OF THOMAS CRANMER IN THE 16TH CENTURY.

The temptation, of course, ~~WE ARE TEMPTED~~, AS PEOPLE WHO LOVE THE CHURCH AND WANT IT TO SURVIVE AND SUCCEED, is TO KEEP AWAY FROM THESE "HARD SAYINGS" OF JESUS', ABOUT TAKING UP A CROSS AND GIVING LIFE AWAY, ~~THIS UNUSUAL HABITUALNESS~~. WE ARE INCLINED TO TALK ABOUT THE BENEFITS OF RELIGION, NOT THE COSTS.



THE WALL STREET JOURNAL PUBLISHED, ~~AND ROOF AND MCKINNEY REPRINTED~~, A DELIGHTFUL ARTICLE BY A KANSAS CITY ADVERTISING EXECUTIVE WHO, WITH TONGUE IN CHEEK, ~~HAS COME~~ came UP WITH A MARKETING PLAN FOR REVITALIZING AMERICA'S MAJOR RELIGIOUS FAITHS."

"MY STRATEGY IS TO CONSOLIDATE THE VARIOUS NAME BRANDS, EVEN THE STRONG FLAGSHIP BRANDS LIKE SOUTHERN BAPTIST INTO ONE IDENTIFIABLE, EXXON-LIKE ENTITY. THE TARGET AUDIENCE HERE IS MOM, DAD, BUTCH AND SIS - SOLID SUBURBAN AMERICANS WHO WANT A LITTLE GOD IN THEIR LIFE AND SOMEWHERE TO GO BEFORE ~~BRUNCH.~~ Brunch AFTER TEST-MARKETING VARIOUS

POSSIBILITIES, I HAVE DECIDED UPON THE NAME MIDDLE AMERICAN CHRISTIAN CHURCH, OR MACCHURCH, FOR AD PURPOSES. I WILL NOT BE SURE OF MACCHURCH'S THEOLOGY UNTIL FOCUS GROUPS ARE RUN, BUT I PLAN ON FOLLOWING THE PROMOTIONAL PATH BLAZED SO SUCCESSFULLY BY HOLIDAY INN. IN OTHER WORDS, THIS WILL BE YOUR 'NO SURPRISES' CHURCH. WHEN DAD BRINGS THE FAMILY HERE, HE CAN BE SURE THAT THEY WILL NOT BE ASKED TO SPEAK IN TONGUES, HANDLE SNAKES OR GIVE MONEY TO THE SANDANISTAS."

AMONG THE AD MAN'S PROPOSALS ARE A NEW BRAND OF JUDAISM FOR BABY BOOMERS AND A "MARKET SEGMENTATION" APPROACH FOR

ROMAN CATHOLICISM. "RC LIGHT FOR POST-VATICAN II LIBERALS, RC CLASSIC FOR TRADITIONALISTS AND RC FREE FOR THOSE MORE INTERESTED IN LIBERATION THEOLOGY THAN PAPAL BULLS."

"PROTESTANTISM," HE SAYS, "PRESENTS MARKETERS WITH SPECIAL PROBLEMS: THE INDIVIDUAL CHURCHES WILL HAVE TO UNDERSTAND THAT THERE IS JUST SO MUCH THEOLOGICAL SHELF SPACE, THAT PRODUCT DIFFERENTIATION IS NOT VIABLE FOR GO-AS-YOU-PLEASE PROTESTANTISM. THUS, THE MIDDLE AMERICAN CHRISTIAN CHURCH OR MACCHURCH." [SEE AMERICAN MAINLINE RELIGION, ROOF AND MCKINNEY, P. 229]

or struggling with

NOW, NO ONE IS QUITE THAT BOLD ABOUT IT, BUT THERE IS AMONG US THE SENSE THAT IF WE WERE A LITTLE MORE MARKET CONSCIOUS, IF WE STOPPED ASKING PEOPLE TO GIVE AND STARTED GIVING THEM WHAT THEY WANT, WE MIGHT BE MORE SUCCESSFUL. AND THERE ARE PLENTY OF SUCCESS MODELS TO EMULATE.

Stopped talking about difficult + complex issues, stopped chatting + started paying attention to what the customer wants

HOWEVER, JUST AT THE MOMENT WE BEGIN TO BE CONVINCED THAT THE MARKET STRATEGY IS CORRECT, JUST WHEN WE INQUIRE SERIOUSLY OF THE SUPER SUBURBAN CHURCHES BOOMING WITH GROWTH, JUST AS WE SHIFT THE WEIGHT OF OUR THEOLOGY TO THE SUPPLY SIDE OF THE LEDGER, HERE COMES JESUS - SAYING THINGS LIKE:

"IF ANY COMES AFTER ME AND DOES NOT HATE HIS OWN LIFE - RENOUNCE ALL THAT HE HAS...HE CANNOT BE A DISCIPLE...

AND

WHAT DOES IT PROFIT, TO GAIN THE WHOLE WORLD AND LOSE ONE'S SOUL...

AND

WHOEVER WOULD SAVE LIFE WILL LOSE IT, AND WHOEVER WOULD LOSE LIFE FOR MY SAKE WILL SAVE IT...

AND

IF one would come after me — deny self- take up a cross and follow

to 23

IF ONE WOULD COME AFTER ME, + DENY SELF + TAKE UP A CROSS AND FOLLOW..."

WHAT IS AT STAKE HERE IS SOUL, NOT JUST THE QUALITY OF LIFE IN OUR CULTURE. WHAT IS AT ISSUE IS THAT CORE OF BEING, THAT ESSENCE OF YOU - WHICH IS YOUR SOUL.

ONE OF THE PIONEERS OF MODERN PSYCHOLOGICAL THEORY, ERIC ERIKSON, TAUGHT THAT IF YOU DON'T MAKE THAT COMMITMENT TO CARE FOR LIFE BEYOND YOURSELF - EITHER IN YOUR OWN CHILDREN, OR IN SOME WAY THE CHILDREN WHO ARE THE NEXT GENERATION - YOU STAGNATE. AND, SAID ERIKSON, YOU WILL BEGIN TO INDULGE

WUTHNOW – chides - us for asking too little

YOURSELF OBSESSIVELY - AS IF YOU WERE YOUR OWN ONE AND ONLY CHILD.

THE HEART OF CHRISTIANITY IS THE TEACHING OF JESUS THAT IN ORDER TO LIVE YOU MUST LOVE, ~~AND IN ORDER TO LOVE YOU MUST DIE.~~ PUT ANOTHER WAY, THE BOLD AND RADICAL PROPOSAL OF THE GOSPEL IS THAT LEARNING TO ~~LOVE~~ LIVE MEANS LEARNING TO DIE. BUT IN THAT PROCESS YOU GAIN SOMETHING INFINITELY PRECIOUS - YOUR OWN SOUL.

love enough to give your life away

There is compelling power in that

~~THE COMPELLING POWER OF THE GOSPEL IS THAT THIS MAN~~ JESUS OF NAZARETH, SO THOROUGHLY BELIEVED IT - HE LIVED IT OUT. HE SO THOROUGHLY LOVED GOD AND HIS FRIENDS AND THE WORLD AND HIS OWN SOUL,

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and there were plenty of opportunities to do that.

Lent - always reminds me that he didn't have to do it: plenty of respectable & reasonable reasons for staying in Galilee.

THAT HE DIED RATHER THAN COMPROMISE HIS INTEGRITY, HIS SENSE OF WHO HE WAS AND WHAT HIS LIFE WAS ABOUT. SOME OF THOSE PEOPLE WHO FIRST HEARD HIS WORDS - LIVED THEM OUT AND LITERALLY GAVE THEIR LIVES AWAY RATHER THAN COMPROMISE THEIR HOPE AND FAITH. AND SO, DOWN THROUGH THE CENTURIES, DISCIPLES OF JESUS HAVE REMEMBERED AND BRAVELY LIVED OUT THE POWER OF HIS WORDS & DIETRICH BONHOEFFER, MARTIN LUTHER KING

SOMETIMES HISTORY AND CIRCUMSTANCE DRAW THE ISSUE VERY CLEARLY FOR US. AT DACHAU ONE OF THE REMAINING BARRACKS IS THE IS THE "PRIESTERBUNKER," THE BARRACKS FOR MINISTERS AND PRIESTS WHO

I just finished reading Love Letters from Cell 92, the newly published correspondence between Dietrich B & his fiance Maria Von Wedermeyer. D.B, 60. pastor/theologian imprisoned by Nazis for his work with the underground - & finally executed for -part in plot to assassinate Hitler. With calmness & heart breaking romance, B. realizes & helps M understand - that his life may be lost. & that it is a matter of love

SAW IN NAZISM AN ABSOLUTE CONFLICT WITH DEVOTION TO JESUS CHRIST, WHO ACTED ON THAT PERCEPTION AND WHO ENDED UP IN A CONCENTRATION CAMP. AND THERE IS NOT A ~~CLERGYPERSON~~ MINISTER - OR A LAYPERSON FOR THAT MATTER, WHO DOES NOT LOOK AT THAT BARRACKS AND WONDER, COULD I HAVE DONE THAT? WOULD I HAVE DONE THAT? THERE ARE TIMES AND CIRCUMSTANCES WHEN THE ISSUE IS CLEARLY DRAWN. THAT WAS ONE OF THEM. AND SO DIETRICH BONHOEFFER, perhaps KNOWING WHAT WAS AHEAD, ~~COULD WRITE~~ wrote ABOUT CHEAP GRACE AND COSTLY GRACE AND THE FAMILIAR AND STIRRING BUT ALSO ~~DISTRESSING~~ DISCOMFORTING LINES:

"WHEN CHRIST CALLS A MAN, HE BIDS HIM COME AND DIE."

WILLIAM WILLIMON ONCE WROTE:

"TO BE MARTYRED IS ONE WAY TO PAY FOR THE FAITH, BUT I SUBMIT IT'S TOUGH TO PAY, DAY BY DAY, IN A LONELY, DULL, IGNORED-BY-PAGANS WILTING THAT COMES FROM WAITING."

Losing life for love - + for him

THE ~~COST~~ IS NOT ALWAYS DRAMATIC, ~~DIE~~ by the ~~SAKE~~. way.

SUSAN SARANDON'S PORTRAYAL OF SISTER HELEN IN DEAD MAN WALKING IS A SENSITIVE AD HONEST EXPRESSION OF THE

WORD OF JESUS. ALMOST BY ACCIDENT SHE BECOMES INVOLVED WITH A CONVICTED MURDERER, WAITING FOR HIS EXECUTION ON DEATH ROW IN A LOUISIANA PRISON. SHE BECOMES HIS ADVOCATE, BUT MORE IMPORTANTLY HIS SPIRITUAL COMPANION. AND IN HER SIMPLE POURING OUT OF HERSELF -- NOT ONLY BECOMES HERSELF, BUT GIVES A SELF -- A SOUL BACK -- TO THE CONDEMNED MAN.

get Perpetua quote

YOU ~~AND I~~ KNOW PEOPLE WHO GIVE THEIR LIVES AWAY.

- THE MOTHER WHO DEVOTES HER LIFE TO RAISING CHILDREN WHO NEED A HOME, + will not

give up on them + continues to love them + give her life to them in adulthood.

I thank 1 A + D. Lodge.

- THE MAN ~~WHOSE FAITHFUL~~ DE~~VOTION TO A MENTALLY~~ ILL ~~WIFE.~~

Who sits by the bedside of his wife descending into the darkness of Alzheimers — while her heart breaks when she no longer recognizes him

- THE ~~SURGEON~~ WHO WORKS ~~LATE~~ ~~INTO THE NIGHT~~.

physician I know who stays late into the night with her uninsured patient

the teacher who elects the inner city school

- THE FRIEND WHO STAYS BESIDE THE BEDSIDE OF ONE DYING WITH AIDS.

THERE ARE COUNTLESS THOUSANDS, ALL AROUND US, WHO BECAUSE THEY KNOW JESUS AND TRUST HIM; ~~AND~~ ARE GIVING THEIR LIVES AWAY AND IN THE PROCESS, DISCOVERING THEIR OWN SOULS.

— to ~~P32~~ ?

Union Sem. Cairstu. plaques to martyred missionaries
Oberlin .. Memorial is a small (round garden building. ?)

Favorite moment at 6A — when we Commission missions workers + Volunteers —

SKIP Jane Eve Price to 32

2.

ONE WHO PAID WITH EVERYTHING SHE HAD WAS EVA JANE PRICE, CONGREGATIONAL MISSIONARY WIFE, IN CHINA IN THE 1890s. HER LONG CORRESPONDENCE WITH HER PARENTS IN DES MOINES HAS BEEN PUBLISHED UNDER THE TITLE CHINA JOURNAL. IT IS A FASCINATING, INFORMATIVE AND MOVING STORY. SHE WAS 33, HER HUSBAND 41, WHEN sell their farm home - THEY DECIDED TO GO TO OBERLIN COLLEGE WITH THEIR TWO CHILDREN TO PREPARE FOR MISSIONARY WORK. SHE WAS VERY HUMAN AND WINSOME: WIFE, MOTHER OF THREE - TWO OF WHOM DIED IN CHILDHOOD. SHE LOVED GOD, BUT SHE ALSO LOVED HER OWN LIFE, CHILDREN AND HER MOTHER, AND THE FARM IN IOWA. IT TOOK THREE MONTHS TO TRAVEL TO CHINA SO A LETTER TO HER MOTHER TOOK SIX

out

MONTHS TO BE ANSWERED. THE LETTERS ARE FULL OF THE STUFF OF OUR OWN HUMANITY - THE DAILY DETAILS OF LIFE IN AN UTTERLY ALIEN CULTURE - WHICH SHE DID NOT UNDERSTAND AND WHICH CALLED HER "FOREIGN DEVIL." AND, OF COURSE, THE LONELINESS AND ISOLATION WHICH CAUSED ONE OF HER FRIENDS TO GO MAD AND ANOTHER TO DECIDE TO COMMIT SUICIDE. IN AN EARLY LETTER SHE WRITES, "MOTHER, WHAT DO YOU THINK I WANTED THE OTHER DAY? WELL, I'LL TELL YOU IF YOU'LL PROMISE NEVER, NEVER TO TELL - ONE OF YOUR BIG APRONS SO I COULD PUT MY HEAD IN IT AND CRY AND IMAGINE IT WAS IN YOUR LAP." [P. 29]

In 1900, eleven years after they left Iowa and Oberlin College, the Prices and their remaining daughter were murdered in the Boxer Rebellion. In her last letter, as the rebellion closes in on the small missionary compound she wrote... "Our lives are worth nothing unless the Lord keeps them. We are all expecting to die and God is giving us grace, and we pray that you at home may be abundantly blessed by him. We would not choose to die now and in any horrible way, but pray without ceasing that God will choose for us and make us glad to go the way he says." [p. 236]

TIME AND CIRCUMSTANCE DO NOT DRAW THE ISSUE ~~OF~~ SHARPLY FOR EVERYONE. ~~I PRAY~~ GOD ~~THAT~~ WE ~~DO~~ NOT HAVE TO FACE THE ISSUE AS DRAMATICALLY AS EVA PRICE DID, AS DIETRICH BONHOEFFER DID.

BUT PRAY GOD THAT OUR GOOD FORTUNE DOES NOT PROTECT US ALSO FROM THE OPPORTUNITY TO DECIDE TO LIVE. PRAY GOD THAT WE ARE NOT SO ANESTHETIZED BY COMFORT AND SECURITY AND THE ORDERLINESS OF OUR LIVES THAT WE NEVER GET AROUND TO LIVING THEM BY GIVING THEM AWAY.

JESUS WOULD SAY THAT YOU HAVEN'T VALUED YOUR OWN SOUL — HAVEN'T REALLY LIVED, IN FACT, UNTIL YOU HAVE LOVED

The question is personal: it is the question Jesus would ask each of us.

"What is it —

without which you are nothing?

What is it — with which you are your true + best self.

PASSIONATELY AND FULLY AND DEEPLY; LOVED ENOUGH TO DENY YOURSELF, TO FORGET YOURSELF, TO DIE A LITTLE OR A LOT. ~~JESUS WOULD SAY THAT TO LOVE DEEPLY IS ALWAYS TO DIE A LITTLE TO SELF~~. IF YOU ARE BLESSED YOU HAVE ALREADY BEGUN TO LEARN THAT. TO LOVE A CHILD, ANOTHER PERSON, A CAUSE, GOD. TO LOVE FULLY IS TO DIE TO SELF AND SIMULTANEOUSLY TO BE YOURSELF, TO HAVE LIFE MORE FULLY AND ABUNDANTLY THAN YOU EVER IMAGINED POSSIBLE.

WHAT IS THE VALUE OF YOUR SOUL? IT IS PRICELESS. ~~PROTECT IT. ENHANCE IT.~~

It is the essence of Stewardship to know that - & then to be a responsible manager: |- protect enhance.

MAKE IT GROW. | YOU ARE NOT AHEAD IF YOU GAIN THE WORLD AND LOSE YOUR SOUL.

YOU COULD GAIN YOUR SOUL + YOUR VERY LIFE + IF YOU LEARNED TO LOVE ENOUGH TO DIE.

JESUS SAID THAT. || IT IS THE TRUTH.

Amen

(Y)

Stewardship is about money | resources - it is about providing the resources for the Church to live + be faithful..

But before it is that - it is about living in the world - in relationship with our communities : responsibly + faithfully

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Before it is about money + pledges it is about value - the value of our own souls -

And it is about saying 'Yes' to the ministry of J.C. - + to his men + women.